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Travel Guide



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Travel Guide



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READER
FIGURE

NARA TRAVELER'S GUIDE

The following are some reminders and basic procedures to be followed when NARA employees travel. They may be useful for employees who travel frequently and cannot remember all the details. If there are any specific questions about the travel regulations or the administrative aspects, you can call either Ron Lawson, NABF, or Shari Lester, NABB, on FTS 523-3035.

1. BUDGET CONSTRAINTS Before any travel arrangements are made, verify with your supervisor that there is money in the budget to cover the requested travel and that the proper authorities have approved the travel.

2. PROCUREMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND LODGING The following procedures should be followed when making travel arrangements.

TRANSPORTATION Call the travel agency, SATO, or, when using GTR's, the contract airline in your region to make flight reservations.

CONTRACT CARRIERS The reservations must be made in accordance with the city-pair route contracts issued by the government. A justification must be put on the travel authorization (GSA 87) if the lowest contract carrier fare is not used. The following three exceptions are the only ones that can be used as a basis for the justification.

A. Space or scheduled flights are not available in time to accomplish the mission requirements.

B. The carrier's flight schedule for the travel involved is inconsistent with the Government's policy of scheduling travel to the maximum extent practicable during normal working hours.

C. On the basis of a comparison of the total cost for each individual trip, the use of a standard jet coach fare ('Y' or equivalent class of service) is less than the contract fare at the time the reservation is made, considering such cost factors as actual transportation costs, subsistence, allowable overtime, or lost productive time. In comparing transportation costs, available 'Super Saver' or other promotional or restrictive fares, 'YDG', or 'MDG' fares cannot be used.

SUPER SAVER RATES The following procedures apply to the use of super saver fares.

A. Travel requests must be processed in time to allow for purchase of tickets. The tickets must be purchased 14 days after reservations are made or 30 days prior to date of travel, whichever comes first.

B. Tickets must be purchased through Omega Travel Agency (in Central Office) or designated travel agencies or SATO's. Airlines will not allow employees to "wait list" (when flights are sold out, you can be placed on a list so that you may take that flight if cancellations occur. The ticket should not be

charged on an individual's Diners Club Card. The travel agent should be instructed to charge the fare to the NARA GTS account in the respective region or to a Government Transportation Request (GTR) in the case of those libraries that use GTR's.

- C. When a discount fare is being used it must be noted in block 15 of the travel authorization.
- D. If an employee cancels or changes the trip for their own convenience they may have to pay any resulting penalties. The following statement must be included and signed by the traveler in block 15 on the travel authorization: "I have every expectation that this travel will occur on the dates specified and I understand that if I am personally responsible for changing the reservation, that I may be held liable for payment of any penalty assessed."
- E. If there is a contract city-pair route, prior approval to use discount fares must be obtained from the Director of Transportation Audits (FW), Thomas Wolf, Room 2111, GS Building, 18th & F Streets, NW, Washington, D.C. 20405 (this does not apply when the contract carrier is the airline offering the discount fare). The explanation should include the cost savings and any other pertinent information as to why the ticket was purchased. The memo must show that the cancellation penalty, any overtime, and

additional per diem added to the cost of the airline ticket would be less than the contract fare. The memo should be submitted (along with the travel authorization) through NAB and NA for concurrence. Submit a copy of the approval from FW when vouchering for travel.

- F. If the trip is cancelled or changed, through no fault of the employee, any penalties (usually 25%) will be charged to the office.

PURCHASE OF TICKETS WITH CASH You should never purchase your tickets with cash if the government is going to pay. However, in the event an employee purchased airline tickets on their own and later NARA agreed to fund the travel, the following procedures should be followed:

- A. If there is no contract city-pair airline between the travel points, a memo will be submitted to NAB for concurrence and NA for approval along with the travel request stating the facts of the situation. If NA approves the purchase, the memo will be returned to the traveler and should be submitted with the travel voucher.
- B. If there is a contract city-pair airline between the travel points, approval for the purchase must be obtained from Mr. Wolf (FW) prior to using the ticket. The employee should initial block 12 of the travel voucher when submitting to NAB for approval.

HOTEL Some contract travel agencies will make hotel reservations utilizing government discount rates. The traveler will have to contact the travel agency to determine if these services are offered. If you have to make your own hotel reservations, inform the hotel that you are a government employee and are entitled to any government discount rates the hotel might offer. If you need help in locating a hotel, NABF and the administrative officers have a copy of the Federal Hotel/Motel discount directory available for use.

RENTAL CARS If rental cars are authorized, the reservation should be made through the respective travel agents using the contract car rental companies. NABF has a complete listing of contract car rentals for employees who have to make their own arrangements. Most rental car agencies offer some type of collision insurance. The fee is added on to the bill. Any insurance offers should be declined, as the government will not reimburse you for this expense.

TICKETS Check with NABF (in Central Office) or Administrative Officers (in the field offices) to determine what is needed to pick up airline tickets.

3. TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION (GSA 87) A travel authorization is mandatory for all travel performed by NARA employees while on government related business. This includes "no cost" travel when employees use administrative leave. The following are guidelines on some of the more confusing parts of the GSA 87.

- A. Block 5-address, should contain your home address rather than your work address if at all possible. Travel reimbursement checks mailed to the office have a greater chance of being delayed, lost or misrouted.
- B. Block 9-purpose, should state a category of travel and a brief description of what you will be doing on travel. The categories are: 1) site visit 2) information meeting 3) training attendance 4) speech or presentation 5) conference attendance 6) relocation 7) entitlement 8) special mission travel 9) other travel.
- C. Block 15-justification, should contain any justifications necessary, a concurrence line for your immediate supervisor, and a statement whether you have a Diners Club Card, are not eligible to receive one, or have refused one when offered.
- D. Unless designated otherwise, the maximum per diem rate in the U.S. is \$50 per day. If you are in a per diem city, itemized expenses are not necessary. On the first and last day of travel you may claim expenses for the portion of the day you are in travel status. See 4C for specific instructions on calculating per diem expenses. An area can also be designated a high geographical rate area (HGRA). The ceiling for HGRA's is \$75 per day. In a HGRA you must keep actual expenses. If your costs are less than the HGRA rate for that

area, you will only be reimbursed the actual amount you spent. For block 14b and 16b the current per diem rate should be used to calculate the total per diem for the trip. Neither the \$50 per diem rules nor the HGRA apply to foreign travel. Special per diem rates are set by the State Department. All foreign travel is vouchered on a per diem basis, rather than actual expense. If you do not know the HGRA rate for a city in the U.S., or if you need the current rates for foreign travel, call NABF on 523-3035.

E. Block 16d-advance requested, should be left blank if no advance is requested. If an advance is requested, it must be a minimum of \$100, rounded up to the nearest \$50. An advance requested in the form of a treasury check does not have a minimum amount and does not have to be rounded to the nearest \$50. The advance should be calculated as follows:

- (1) If you have a Diners Club Card, you are entitled to 20% of 16b, total per diem and other, if you use commercial transportation. It is 20% of 16c, total estimated cost, if you use a privately owned vehicle. To obtain the advance, present your Diners Club Card along with a signed copy of your travel authorization to the imprest cashier. The advance must be authorized on the GSA 87.

(2) If you are not eligible for a Diners Club Card, your advance is 80% of 16b or 16c depending on whether you use commercial or privately owned transportation. A SF 1038 (Application for Advance of Funds) must be filled out to request the advance and must accompany the GSA 87. In Central Office, NA signs all SF 1038's. In the field offices, the directors delegated signature authority by the Archivist sign the SF 1038.

(3) If you refused a Diners Club Card, you are limited to the same amount as those who do have Diners Club Cards. A SF 1038 will need to be prepared as prescribed in 3E(2) above, except that the amount can only be 20%, as described in 3A(1) above.

F. Block 20-approvals, will always be signed by Patricia D. Dews, Director of Budget & Finance for Central Office employees, Field Directors, any foreign travel, and relocations. For field employees (except foreign travel and relocations) block 20 will be signed by those directors in the field delegated the authority.

G. Block 21-authorizations, will be signed by the Archivist for all foreign travel, relocations, and office heads. Block 21 will be signed by Claudine J. Weiher, Assistant Archivist for Management and Administration for all other Central Office employees and Field

Directors. For field employees, those directors designated the authority will sign block 21.

- H. Keep a signed copy or the original of your GSA 87 with you at all times during your travel. This is to assure airlines, hotels, etc., that you are on government travel and are entitled to any discounts they offer.

4. TRAVEL VOUCHERS (SF 1012) While on travel keep in mind that all receipts for meals and miscellaneous expenses over \$25.00 and receipts for lodging must be submitted with your travel voucher. Your airline ticket coupon and a copy of your GSA 87 must be submitted also.

- A. The maximum amount allowed for meals and miscellaneous subsistence is 45% of the per diem rate for the city you are in. For example, in a high rate area of \$75.00, the maximum is \$33.75.

- B. The maximum amount that can be claimed for subsistence expenses is the per diem rate or the HGRA rate for that area. Anything above that amount is out of pocket expense to you and will not be reimbursed. However, even if you exceed the maximum amount, show your actual costs on the SF 1012 in column "j"-total subsistence expense. In column "m"-amount claimed: subsistence, claim only the maximum amount allowed if you exceed that amount for subsistence.

C. Keep track of the times you leave and return so that an audit of your voucher will verify what expenses you are entitled to (i.e., if you arrive home at 4:00 P.M. you could not claim dinner for that day).

(1) For travel less than 24 hours but more than 10 hours, the maximum amount allowable is 45% of the per diem rate (i.e. If the area is a HRGA, you can not claim more than \$33.75).

(2) If the travel is less than 10 hours, you are not entitled to any reimbursement for per diem, unless the travel begins before 6 a.m. or terminates after 8 p.m.

(3) When you are in a per diem rather than actual cost city, your reimbursement is based on the time you depart from and arrive at your residence. Reimbursement is claimed by the number of quarters of the day you are in travel status. The first quarter is 12 am - 6am, second quarter is 6am-12 pm, third quarter is 12 pm - 6 pm, fourth quarter is 6 pm - 12 am. Any portion of a quarter is calculated as an entire quarter. For example if you arrive at your residence at 3 pm, you would claim three quarters of the per diem rate for that day.

D. If your ticket was purchased on your Individual Diners Club Card, you have to claim the cost of the ticket

on your voucher in order to be reimbursed. If you do not have a Diners Club Card, or if you are using a super saver rate per NARA procedures, do not claim the cost of the ticket because your ticket has already been paid for by NARA on a Government Transportation System (GTS) account or a Government Transportation Request (GTR). Verify the account number your ticket was charged to. If you have a Diners Club Card, but your ticket was not charged to your account, you should not claim it on your voucher. The travel agency you are dealing with should be notified of the mistake.

- E. If you obtained an advance on your Diners Club Card, do not deduct anything from your amount claimed. Also, do not claim the amount of the advance on your voucher. Your reimbursement for your actual expenses is to be used to pay the advance back. You owe Diners Club the amount of the advance, not NARA.
- F. If you do not have a Diners Club Card and you received an advance, deduct the advance from the amount claimed. If you owe money to NARA, make out a check to NARA for the difference and attach it to the voucher. Any advances not paid back within 60 days can be withheld from future paychecks.
- G. Once the voucher is complete, attach receipts, a copy of the GSA 87, and sign block 13-traveler signature. The statement: "I have reviewed

this voucher and recommend approval" should be put in block 12, with a concurrence line for your supervisor. If a ticket was purchased with cash, initial block 12.

H. For all Central Office employees, Field Directors, foreign travel, and relocations, vouchers will be approved in block 14 by Patricia D. Dews, Director Budget & Finance. For field employees, vouchers will be approved by designated Field Directors. No signatures are to be put in block 16.

I. Some typical problems with travel vouchers include: the meals and miscellaneous expenses exceed 45% of per diem rate, tickets and advances are not claimed properly, airline ticket receipts are not attached, and "other" costs (taxi, phone, etc) are not itemized on the voucher.

5. DEADLINES GSA 87's should be submitted to NABF or Administrative Officers in the field as soon as possible to ensure availability of funds and administrative review. Preferably, this would be done at least 2 weeks before the travel. SF 1012's should be submitted to NABF (Administrative Officers) within 5 working days after the travel.

6. AVERAGE TIME REQUIRED FOR REIMBURSEMENT Once the vouchers are reviewed and approved, they will be transmitted by NAB (for Central Office, Field Directors, foreign travel, and

relocations), or Administrative Officers (for other field employees) to GSA finance. GSA finance should pay travel vouchers within 10 working days from the date received. The request for payment is forwarded by GSA to Treasury, so it takes about 10 more days to receive your travel check. Diners Club bills on a monthly basis. Therefore, it is very important to submit your SF 1012 as soon as possible and make sure it is correct so it does not have to be returned for corrections.